

Music Pedagogy: Discussion forum questions

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Introduction: theoretical departure

This OER is based on a workshop designed for educators teaching music as part of the CAPS Life Skills/Creative Arts syllabus. The questions can be used as a guide for open class discussions or as prompts for online discussion forum activities.

The theoretical foundation behind these questions is that success in any classroom is informed by two loves: love for the subject and love for the learners. These questions aim to guide music educators-in-training in reflecting on their own pedagogical attitudes in their music classrooms. They first focus on their personal relationship with music (the phenomenon, not just the subject) and then transfer these attitudes to the music classroom.

When reflecting on personal beliefs around teaching music, the goal is to help educators discover their “WHY”: Why do they teach music? In the context for which these questions were designed, many educators did not volunteer to teach music; they were assigned to do so. Therefore, I encourage them to be honest in their reflections, avoiding answers they believe are proper or acceptable. By being truthful about their attitudes without judgment, they stand a better chance of managing those attitudes and minimizing any negative impact on their learners. Ideally, they may even use their unmediated relationship with music as a phenomenon to positively adjust their view of music as a subject.

By understanding their relationship with music-as-phenomenon first, and music-as-subject second, the questions then explore educators' perceptions of their learners' attitudes toward music.

Personal Relationship with Music

- Who listens to music? What kind of music do you listen to?
- Who doesn't listen to music? Explain!
- Who plays musical instruments? What instruments do you play?
- Who has ever performed music on stage?
- Who has ever sung in a choir?
- Who has ever sung a song with other people?
- Who didn't answer “yes” to any of these questions?
- Who doesn't like music at all?
- Share your earliest music memory from childhood.

This shows that all of us have some level of musical knowledge. It is in our DNA and part of the human experience. It is worthwhile to take the time to understand your own relationship with music before entering the classroom.

Beliefs Around Teaching Music

The purpose of this discussion is to help you discover your own "WHY." Why do you teach music?

- Who believes it's important to keep music in the curriculum?
- Who believes it's not important to keep music in the curriculum? Why?
- Who teaches music because they chose it?
- Who teaches music because they didn't have a choice?
- Who feels they are not adequately trained in music to teach it?
- Who feels confident in their ability to teach music?
- Who feels unsure about how to approach music in the classroom?
- Create a word cloud of attitudes or emotions that emerge when you teach music (e.g., frustration, anger, joy, fulfillment, etc.).
- Who enjoys teaching the music component in the Creative Arts class? Why?
- Who doesn't enjoy teaching the music component? Why not?
- What would make teaching music more tolerable, even if not enjoyable?
- What do you need from this course to help you teach music in your classroom?

The Learner's Perspective

- Have you noticed how your pupils respond to learning music?
- Describe the overall atmosphere and attitude of your pupils when they enter your class.
- Have you ever asked your pupils what music they like or dislike?
- Do you think it's possible to incorporate their interests into your teaching to help them connect better with the curriculum content?

Reflection on the Session

Remember, in this session, you are the learner, but outside the classroom, you are the teacher.

What about this short 30-minute session would you like to share with your pupils? What did you find worthwhile?

What about this session would you want to avoid? Was anything unnecessary?

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